



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Bureau of the Census
Washington, DC 20233-0001

MEMORANDUM FOR Distribution

From: Cynthia Clark
Associate Director for Methodology and Standards

Subject: Evaluation of the Simplified Enumerator Questionnaire-Observation
Report Study

I am pleased to present the executive summary of one of the evaluation studies for the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. The dress rehearsal was conducted in three sites — Columbia, South Carolina; Menominee County, Wisconsin; and Sacramento, California. The evaluation studies cover detailed aspects of eight broad areas related to the census dress rehearsal — census questionnaire, address list, coverage measurement, coverage improvement, promotion activities, procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting, field operations, and technology.

The executive summary for each evaluation study is also available on the Census Bureau Internet site (<http://www.census.gov/census2000> and click on the link to "Evaluation"). Copies of the complete report may be obtained by contacting Carnelle Sligh at (301) 457-3525 or by e-mail at carnelle.e.sligh@ccmail.census.gov. Please note that the complete copy of the following reports will not be publically released: reports regarding procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting and the Evaluation of Housing Unit Coverage on the Master Address File.

The evaluations are distributed broadly to promote the open and thorough review of census processes and procedures. The primary purpose of the dress rehearsal is to simulate portions of the environment we anticipate for Census 2000, so we can identify and correct potential problems in the processes. Thus, the purpose of the evaluation studies is to provide analysis to support time critical review and possible refinements of Census 2000 operations and procedures.

The analysis and recommendations in the evaluation study reports are those of staff working on specific evaluations and, thus, do not represent the official position of the Census Bureau. They represent the results of an evaluation of a component of the census plan. They will be used to analyze and improve processes and procedures for Census 2000. The individual evaluation recommendations have not all yet been reviewed for incorporation in the official plan for Census 2000. These evaluation study reports will be used as input to the decision making process to refine the plans for Census 2000.

The Census Bureau will issue a report that synthesizes the recommendations from all the evaluation studies and provides the Census Bureau review of the dress rehearsal operation. This report will also indicate the Census Bureau's official position on the utilization of these results in the Census 2000 operation. This report will be available July 30th.

Evaluation of the Simplified Enumerator Questionnaire- Observation Report Study

April 1999

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Planning, Research, and
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Simplified Enumerator Questionnaire (SEQ) is an enumerator-administered paper questionnaire used to collect information from households that do not respond to the Census by mail. In the past, questionnaires used by enumerators for nonresponse followup have been cumbersome and awkward for both enumerators and respondents. To improve the nonresponse followup questionnaire, the format of the SEQ has changed dramatically since 1990.

The focus of this evaluation is on questions and methods that have changed since 1990. Results from a motion and time study, observation reports and enumerator debriefings as well as item nonresponse rates are the basis of the SEQ evaluation. In this particular report we discuss findings from the observation reports which consisted of a relatively small number of standardized observation reports completed by 17 Headquarters employees. Data quality is measured, in part, by procedural deviation as noted by the observers. Substantial deviation may indicate problems with the SEQ procedures. Some of the major findings include:

- C There is apparent difficulty with the question that asks “**Is this house or apartment a vacation or seasonal home or a temporary residence for your household?**” Many enumerators are either rewording the question or skipping it entirely. It was recommended that this question be rewritten using language that is easier for both enumerators and respondents to understand. The question has been revised for Census 2000.
- C Many of the observed enumerators either administered the form in a person-based format or a combination of person/topic based. Implications could be an under reporting of large households. It would be helpful to stress the importance of using a topic-based format during enumerator training.
- C A majority of enumerators did not indicate to respondents that they could choose one or more races. It was recommended that the question on the Simplified Enumerator Questionnaire be rewritten, and this has been done for Census 2000. It is also recommended that the importance of this instruction be stressed during enumerator training.